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The Soviet Approach to Summit II

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THE SOVIET APPROACH TO SUMMIT II

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PRÉCIS

This paper does not presume to develop a scenario for the Washington Summit or to describe Soviet negotiating positions in detail. Its purpose is to describe the broad aims and calculations which will underlie the Soviet, and Brezhnev's personal, approach to the occasion.

Some of the principal observations made are as follows:

- The present Soviet course of seeking normalization and détente in relations with the West is not conceived as a brief tactical phase; Brezhnev's policy has strong backing at home and it is likely to endure for some time.
- The policy springs from a calculation that a skillfully managed détente can enhance the USSR's relative power position, especially in Europe. It springs equally from recognition of vulnerabilities, especially economic weaknesses, which the Soviets believe cooperation with the West can help to overcome.
- Brezhnev's main purpose in Washington will be to give momentum to the recent positive development of Soviet-American relations; he will be less concerned to achieve substantive agreements of major significance.
- He will give great emphasis to economic relations, especially pushing MFN, promoting investment in Soviet resource development on favorable terms, and facilitating arrangements for acquiring US technology.
- The occasion is unlikely to produce any major changes in Soviet positions on SALT or MBFR; Brezhnev might, however, join in some move to expedite negotiations.
- On crisis areas like Indochina and the Middle East, the Soviets may convey willingness to cooperate tacitly, but they are unlikely to enter upon joint, explicit arrangements with the US which their friends would see as "collusion".
- Even if Summit II does not produce important and concrete results on many specific issues, the atmospheric effects will almost certainly be positive and will confirm Brezhnev's belief that the present course of Soviet policy is the correct one.

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THE ESTIMATE

1. Brezhnev comes to Washington more confident of his position and policies than he has been at any time in his years of power. He can approach Summit II with all the authority he needs to pursue a central goal, one which he sees as serving vital Soviet foreign policy and domestic requirements at this time: further progress toward a *modus vivendi* with the West and, as a major part of this, the further development of Soviet-US bilateral relations.

Basic Policy Determinants

2. The present Soviet policy as a whole proceeds from the Brezhnev leadership's conviction that the USSR currently has opportunities to improve its relative position, especially in Europe, but also has serious vulnerabilities. Both argue for eased relations with the West. On the optimistic side, the Soviet leaders believe that present international trends offer the USSR a chance to gain ground on the US in international power, and they see in "peaceful coexistence", dynamically managed, a safe way of grasping the chance. The Soviets, having substantially achieved

strategic parity, now find the US to be curtailing its international commitments and troubled by various problems at home; they see the Atlantic alliance as agitated by divisive trade and monetary issues, and seemingly unsure of its purposes and policies in the security sphere. By this kind of Soviet reckoning, the West, including the US, is ready for détente with the USSR—and more likely now than previously to make concessions to get it.

3. But Moscow's confidence is mixed with anxieties about other aspects of its international position and about obvious weaknesses in its domestic base. Because of this, there is reason to believe that Soviet policy is not now in one of those purely tactical and transient phases of détente so familiar in the past. The Soviets have reasons—arising out of weakness as well as strength—to seek a genuine, albeit limited, accommodation with the US and its European allies.

—The Soviet leaders recognize that a measure of mutual confidence is necessary if the costs and risks of uncontrolled competition in strategic weapons between

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the superpowers are to be avoided. Moreover, they are under pressure to devote resources in increasing quantity to domestic non-military purposes.

- They also appreciate that some degree of understanding, and even cooperation, between the superpowers could well be necessary to prevent the intensification of regional conflicts into which both might be drawn.
- Because of their fundamental and abiding concern with China, the Soviets want to limit Sino-American rapprochement. They fear, apparently to an irrational degree, that the mutual hostility between themselves and China, combined with the latter's moves toward normalization of relations with the US, Europe, and Japan, could one day lead to the USSR's isolation in world politics.
- They see cooperation with the US as conducive to the process of negotiation in Europe from which they hope to achieve stabilization of their sphere in Eastern Europe, gains in trade and technology, and eventually greater influence in Western Europe.
- The Soviets now frankly recognize that they cannot by their own efforts overcome the technological backwardness that keeps them from joining the front ranks of the advanced industrial states. Failures in agriculture imply some dependence on grain imports for years to come. The Soviets believe—and their expectations seem exaggerated—that they can develop broader economic relations with the West which can go far toward solving these problems.

Internal Factors

4. There has been internal resistance to the current foreign policy line: apparently at the

top political level (the demotion and eventual dismissal from the Politburo of Shelest was probably partly due to this factor), and probably less directly from defense interests, worried about the possible consequences of arms negotiations, and from elements in the party and police bureaucracies, which fear the internal consequences of wider contacts with the West. And Soviets at many levels will continue to ask why their government, even while tightening internal discipline, should move toward cordial relations with the old capitalist enemy. Such attitudes will help to reinforce certain instincts of the Soviet leaders themselves and will set limits on how far they will want to go in East-West détente. Signs that this policy was having seriously unsettling effects within the USSR—or, equally, in Eastern Europe—would almost certainly cause them to apply the brakes.

5. Brezhnev's personal role has been pivotal. Although not the sole architect of current foreign policies, he has now made them his own, and he has at least had primary responsibility for overcoming the resistance to these policies and for shaping the political consensus which supports them. Obviously, then, he has no small political investment in their success or failure, both as a vehicle for projecting Soviet influence abroad and as a device for extracting help for the Soviet economy. He could be hurt politically, or might himself choose to shift direction, if present expectations were seriously disappointed. Moreover, Brezhnev is now 66, and many of his principal colleagues are even older; they cannot continue indefinitely and new men will thus be moving into the top positions.

6. It follows that the line Brezhnev now espouses is not irreversible. But the chief elements in this policy have been working their way to the surface throughout the post-Stalin period; important aspects of it are likely to

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persist, simply because to move in other directions—toward isolationism or confrontation tactics—would hardly seem to be attractive alternatives, given the USSR's domestic imperatives and the problem of China. Thus there are strong incentives on the Soviet side to make Summit II a success and to continue on the détente course.

Brezhnev's Expectations for Summit II

7. Brezhnev will be interested in the aura the Summit will generate as well as its substantive content. He is likely to view Summit II chiefly as an opportunity to reinforce the momentum established at Summit I. He has less need for specific accomplishments now than then, but the general picture conveyed—at home, in the US, and around the world—as to the state of US-Soviet relations is important to him. He wants, for instance, to show that US-Soviet relations are progressing at least at an equal pace with the improvement in US-Chinese relations.

8. Brezhnev will also be seeking—on this, his first visit to the US and the first visit by a Soviet party chief since 1959—to stimulate a conciliatory attitude toward himself and Soviet aims on the part of the American public, with the accent probably on the genuineness of Moscow's desire to see the Cold War ended and a new page in East-West relations opened. Realizing that Congress will have an influential role with respect to projects of considerable interest to him (e.g., trade and MFN legislation), he will probably be attempting to make a favorable impression in that quarter. He will no doubt want, at the same time, to cultivate his relationship with the President and to indicate that he values the President's sponsorship of a relaxation in US-Soviet relations. He will thus probably temper any inclination to extract negotiating advantage from current controversies in the US. He would

expect that such a demeanor could be more beneficial for the USSR's relations with the US over the longer run.

9. In his bargaining posture, Brezhnev will naturally want to radiate confidence in Soviet strength and a sense of equality. He will take the position that the further development of Soviet-American relations is no less in the US' interest than in the USSR's. US-made "linkages", besides representing less than the best bargain as the Soviets see it, also suggest to them that the US is attempting to use Soviet vulnerabilities in one area to extract concessions in another, and this stirs old feelings of inferiority. Nonetheless, Brezhnev is surely realist enough to recognize that the US will expect a return for helping him with his economic difficulties and not taking advantage of his China problem. He will probably anticipate that the US will be asking him to show movement on such matters as force reductions in Europe (MBFR) and to exercise restraint in the Middle East and Vietnam. In addition, he will know that he will be asked to explain the Soviet position on Jewish emigration.

Areas for Discussion

10. *Economic and Trade Relations.* As Brezhnev acknowledged during his recent visit to West Germany, the USSR is beginning to move away from its traditional policy of autarky. The Soviets are prepared to accept a certain degree of dependence on the West in order to overcome their technological lag and get help in developing their natural resources. They have evidently gone some way toward convincing themselves—perhaps over-optimistically—that there is substantial opportunity for developing US-Soviet economic relations to their advantage. They have good political as well as economic reasons for wanting to see this happen; among these is their

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desire to be acknowledged as a great power qualified to be treated as an equal in economic as well as other dealings. And their economic motivation in itself is very strong. They will have to have increased trade, and especially substantial new credits, to cover the cost of additional imported technology and know-how. Much of the assistance they seek could be obtained from Western Europe and Japan. But they feel that the US and Soviet economies are more nearly similar in scale, and they have a high regard for American technology. They probably reckon that the opening up of US-Soviet economic relations would, in any case, stimulate a competitive reaction on the part of other Western nations.

11. Brezhnev will probably be pressing harder to produce signs of progress in this area than in any other. He has considerable personal knowledge of and interest in the USSR's agricultural problems. Even if the need for foreign wheat becomes less acute than it was last year, there will be a continuing need for substantial imports of feed grains, important for the expansion of the Soviet livestock base. A long-term US-Soviet grain deal could have advantages for the USSR in terms of a guaranteed source of supply, assured prices, and fixed delivery schedules. Brezhnev will surely be interested in learning what the prospects are for a deal at the right price. He will expound on the potential of the Soviet market for American business, argue the USSR's reliability as a trading partner, and stress that the USSR could help the US with its energy problem. In particular, he will want to stimulate official and private interest in joint US-Soviet ventures for the development of Soviet resources—natural gas being one obvious example—since the Soviets see this as the most feasible way for them to finance any very large increase in imports. At

the same time, he will, as already noted, be lobbying, with an eye particularly on the US Congress, for long-term, low-interest credits and MFN treatment. Without doubt, he will try to have the final communiqué on his visit contain the strongest possible expression of the President's desire to see US-Soviet economic relations grow.

12. *SALT*. Brezhnev will arrive fully briefed on the issues underlying the present impasse at Geneva. Even if certain limited SALT agreements are ready for signature, he will understand that Summit II cannot be capped by major strategic arms agreements as Summit I was. He may be inclined simply to project a positive attitude toward the negotiations and otherwise confine himself to probing for give in the US position. On certain issues—US nuclear-armed systems stationed in Europe, for example—he will almost certainly reiterate the Soviet maximal position, without necessarily expecting this to have any specific result. Yet Brezhnev certainly does not want the Geneva negotiations to become completely stalled; he could consider the Summit the right moment for decisions to be made at the highest political level which would move the talks forward. What he might propose or accept in this regard can only be conjectured: he might be prepared to join in a declaration setting general priorities for the present phase of SALT, or even perhaps to agree to issue instructions to both delegations to focus next on the problem of qualitative controls, e.g., MIRVs/MRVs.

13. *European Security Issues*. The Soviets remain convinced that a European security conference (CSCE) could help them to increase their political influence and economic ties in Western Europe, as well as contribute to the consolidation of their position in Eastern Europe. Moscow is less interested in the negotiation on MBFR, or at least less certain

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as to what benefits might be derived from that negotiation. What Brezhnev would like to obtain from the US at this point are assurances on the content and timing of CSCE—commitment, in the one case, not to press hard on the issue of freedom of communication between Eastern and Western Europe, and, in the other, agreement to allow CSCE to be completed before MBFR is convened. He will be aware that this matter can stir trouble in US-allied relations. As for MBFR, Brezhnev will probably see the need, being in the US capital, to display a constructive attitude, and also the advantage of playing on West European concerns about US-Soviet bilateralism. He might think he could do both by proposing that the reductions process begin with the US and the USSR making token cuts or at most by carrying out something like a 10 percent cut on either side.

14. *Middle East.* The USSR accepts as a minimum that it and the US have a common interest in avoiding direct confrontation in the Middle East. After its experience with Egypt, it is also generally uneasy about its relations with the radical Arab states and about its lack of leverage in the context of the Arab-Israeli conflict. At the same time, the USSR is undoubtedly under pressure from its frustrated Egyptian clients to get the US to exert pressures on Israel. Thus Brezhnev will hope, whether through an initiative of his own or through his response to a US initiative, to have the Summit produce some evidence of the determination of the Great Powers to renew efforts for a political settlement. If he does have his own proposals to make, none are likely to be new; they will place heavy stress on the need for the US to get Israel to commit itself to vacating occupied Arab territories.

15. Moscow sees the Middle East not only as the arena of Arab-Israeli struggle but also

as a prime theater of Soviet-American competition. This places strict limits on how far Brezhnev would be willing to go at the Summit in any explicit, joint undertakings with the US aimed at reducing the likelihood of conflict. If, in fact, conflict or the clear threat of it were to develop, Moscow would probably enter direct communications with the US in an attempt to exercise some form of "crisis management". The Soviets do not see the present situation as requiring measures of this kind—which could make them vulnerable to charges of "collusion." It is a near certainty that the Russians will continue to insist that they will not negotiate a Middle East arms control agreement except as part of a comprehensive settlement of the Arab-Israeli issue.

16. *Vietnam.* The Soviets would be concerned also in the case of Vietnam lest they expose themselves to allegations of "collusion" with the US. They would probably be disinclined on this account to engage overtly with the US in measures aimed at preserving the cease-fire, other than to reaffirm the validity of the Paris Agreements. They would be strongly averse to committing themselves expressly to limiting the delivery of arms to North Vietnam. Yet the Soviets almost certainly believe that their interests on the whole would not be well served by a reheating of the war, and Brezhnev may be prepared to go at least as far as to convey this attitude to the US. He might perhaps, in addition, indicate implicitly his readiness to exercise restraint in arms supplies, at least as long as the cease-fire is in effect.

17. *China.* The problem of China will be very much on Brezhnev's mind throughout the Summit, even if it is not directly discussed. While Brezhnev may believe that exposing Soviet anxieties about China would weaken his negotiating hand, his interest in the sub-

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ject is bound to emerge in some way. He will, at least, be seeking to find clues as to where the US is planning to go in its relations with Peking and to get across the idea that beyond a certain point the US would be purchasing improved relations with the Chinese at the expense of its relations with the USSR. Although it would suit him to do so, he will recognize that he would have little chance of succeeding in an attempt to insinuate anti-Chinese overtones into the US-Soviet Summit.

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18. Even if Summit II does not produce important and concrete results on many specific issues, Brezhnev is likely to go away

pleased. He will be persuaded that the occasion itself has added to his stature as a world statesman and increased his authority at home. Although, as noted above, the present course of Soviet policy is not irreversible, the forces working for a more restrained power competition will no doubt be further strengthened. Nothing will have changed Moscow's view that the Soviet-American relationship retains at bottom an adversary character. But Brezhnev is likely to be confirmed in his belief that the present course of Soviet policy, especially the aspect of dealing with the US at the Summit in an atmosphere of relative normalization, is the correct one.

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